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ABSTRACT

This statement discusses issues surrounding the reauthorization of the Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) focus on the need for continued research on diverse aspects of language education. Background information and research on the need for second language instruction in the United States is reviewed, and recent initiatives from various sectors supporting the growth and improvement of foreign language education are described, including existing and proposed federal legislation. The low priority afforded research on language education is highlighted, and areas in which substantial research and program development are needed for improving classroom instruction are outlined. OERI's potential role in such research is discussed. (MSE)

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"Strength Through Wisdom" Revisited:
Reauthorization of OERI And
The Need for a Center for Research on Foreign Language Learning

Written Statement for
House Subcommittee on Select Education
Hearing on Reauthorization
of the
Office of Educational Research and Improvement

Offered At The Invitation Of The
Joint National Committee for Languages

by

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Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, ladies and gentlemen, it is an honor and a pleasure to comment today on issues surrounding the reauthorization of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement at the Department of Education.

As an instructor of foreign language and literature at a major university, I have over a decade of experience in foreign language education at major universities and at a liberal arts college. In this time I have counseled students regarding language study in courses, international educational exchanges, and careers, assisted in preparing teachers to teach foreign languages in K-12, worked with high school teachers to strengthen the articulation between high school and university language instruction, and have worked in many other language related activities. I am currently an assistant professor of literature and language with responsibility for coordinating elementary and intermediate French language instruction at American University. While my comments this morning are offered as an individual, in many cases they also reflect concerns which have been voiced on many occasions and in many fora by the organizations and individuals active and concerned about the state of language and international studies in our nation. I am offering these comments at the invitation of the Joint National Committee for Languages which represents many of the language education organizations in the United States.

BRINGING THE SKY-WRITING DOWN TO EARTH:

Language and international skills are a keystone in our nation's strategy to secure peace, prosperity and future prospects. Reports such as Workforce 2000 and the more recently issued report, Investing in People: A Strategy to Address America's Workforce Crisis by the Secretary of Labor's Commission on Workforce Quality and Labor Market Efficiency have highlighted the importance of upgrading education for all Americans to enable our nation to compete in rapidly evolving world markets. As Richard Tucker at the Center for Applied Linguistics notes, two major trends of particular interest to educators emerge from these reports. First, these studies call attention to critical deficiencies in our nation's ability to provide skills needed for the evolving labor market. Language minority individuals are particularly underrepresented in higher education and in positions of authority. Effective instruction of English to language minority Americans is vital for bringing these Americans into the economic mainstream and to provide the basis for sustainable economic development.

Secondly, as our nation's increasing multinational participation in business, diplomacy, science, intergovernmental activities, and scholarly exchange grows, native English speaking Americans remain primarily monolingual, putting our country at a distinct disadvantage in an international context. As Tucker puts it, "The U.S. educational system has been remarkably unsuccessful in developing and expanding our nation's language resources....We need a focused program involving continued research in diverse aspects of language education, the

development of coherent language education programs and materials, and the training of educators who are sensitive to the importance of language content instruction for all American residents, both language majority and minority. The national agenda for language education remains unfinished".

Simply learning languages is not the "magic bullet". J. David Edwards, executive director of the Joint National Committee on Languages, reminds us that it would be foolish to suggest that simply learning a second language will erase problems such as the enduring national trade deficit and international competition. "But it would be equally foolish to assume that American business can regain competitiveness without a knowledge of other nations' economies and politics, without an understanding of their cultures, and without an ability to communicate in their languages." And as he points out, while the Reagan (and Bush) administrations have expressed a national commitment to excellence in education, "the greatest support in this area in real terms has been from the public, state leaders and Congress. Unlike the era of the National Defense Education Act, when national leadership created educational reforms that 'trickled down' to the states and localities, recent reforms in language study and international education have actually 'perculated up' from the states".

There is widening public support for foreign language education, including support for beginning language instruction in elementary school. A 1986 survey cited by Edwards found that 86% of those surveyed felt that it was important to study a second language in elementary school.

Governors--in touch with the local grassroots sentiment and faced with the complexities of encouraging local economic growth--have strongly supported improved language education. For example, in November 1986 the Southern Governors' Association published a report, "Cornerstone of Competition": which states in its introducation that "each day, we pay a political and economic price for our inability to understand and communicate with our global neighbors." The study called for substantially upgrading language education in the member states (Advisory Council on Education, 1986).

The continued growth of foreign language instruction received another major push last winter from the National Governors' Association. N.G.A.'s task force report on international education recommended increasing foreign language requirements for entry into colleges and universities, increasing opportunities for language study in summer months and after school, and providing second language education in elementary schools. As Governor Thomas Kean of New Jersey wrote in a foreward to the report, "More than ever before our national security--indeed world stability as a whole, depends upon our understanding of and communications with other countries." The N.G.A. 1989 annual meeting focused on "America in Transition: The International Frontier" and a delegation of governors traveled to Brussels to discuss implications of the growing integration of the Common Market as a facet of their work on "America in Transition."

Many governors have worked hard to turn this rhetoric into reality. Indiana, under the leaderhip of Governor Robert Orr, was interested in developing trade with Japan and in bringing in Japanese companies. In 1987, at Governor Orr's urging, the state legislature added $260,000 for new programs to train teachers in Japanese and Chinese. The momentum is building in other states. California has fewer than 20 Japanese programs and a small number of Chinese and Russian programs, even though California has a large Asian-American population and is rapidly expanding its trade with the Pacific Rim. However, the state is planning a major push to promote foreign language education this year.

Nationwide, the changes in the past few years have been remarkable. 31 states instituted some form of language requirement, and all but four reported activities addressing foreign language needs. Many have reinstated language requirements for attending state universities. New York adopted an action plan for global education that provides aid to school districts based on foreign language enrollment requirements, requires students to pass a proficiency exam, and requires all students to have studied a foreign language by ninth grade. Texas, California, Kentucky, Viginia, Illinois, South Carolina, and Florida are among the states that have expanded language requirements. The last survey of foreign-language enrollments conducted by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages in 1985 found that 4.5 million students in grades 7-12 --one quarter of all students in those grades--were enrolled in a language course. This is about one million more than were enrolled in 1982. In several states, such as Virginia and New York, half of all K-12 students are now studying a foreign language. A study by the

Modern Language Association found that in 1988 over a million Americans were registered in foreign language courses in America's colleges and universities, an increase of 3.9% over 1983. This doesn't include courses at specialized schools like Berlitz and cultural associations like Alliance Française.

In addition to increased enrollments in the traditional West European languages, we are seeing growing interest in non-Western tongues such as Chinese, Japanese, and Russian. Some 300 schools now have programs in Japanese, compared with only a handful teaching the subject less than a decade ago. And smaller numbers have added programs in Chinese, Russian, Korean, Arabic, and other languages.

There have been important national initiatives as well. The 1979 report of the President's Commission on Foreign Languages and International Studies, "Strength Through Wisdom: A Critique of U.S. Capability" redefined a national role for language. Previously the major rationale for inclusion of languages in the general curriculum had been allowing us to define our "Western" roots and providing a point of comparision. The study pointed out that language has become a tool in the struggle for economic prosperity, military security,and the quality of life. By changing the framework in which language learning was considered, the report helped forge an alliance between teachers of international studies, language teachers, and the larger public and private community.

Reflecting this emerging consensus, a great deal of national legislation for strengthening foreign language education has been initiated in recent years. The number of bills dealing with foreign language and international studies has increased each year, and Congress has slightly increased funding for foreign languages, exchanges, and intelligence.

The 99th Congress passed the U.S. Scholarship Program for Developing Areas, the Central American Scholarship Program, the Japanese Technical Literature Act, and created the Fascell Fellowships to broaden exposure of embassy and consulate personnel to Soviet and Eastern European cultures. Congress also passed and the President signed the National Defense Authorization Act with provisions for a bonus for members of the Armed forces on the basis of their proficiency in a foreign language. Congress reauthorized the 1986 Higher Education Act whith new provisions for language studies including the creation of two to five regional language centers to focus on foreign language pedagogy. It contains provisions for intensive summer foreign language institutes and assistance for Universities to acquire foreign language publications and requires the Education Department to assist in the publication of materials in the less commonly taught languages. Representative Panetta successfully amended the bill to provide grants to colleges and universities for model language programs, funds for teacher training and internships for foreign language students to work overseas. Senator Paul Simon amended the legislation to mandate a study of a national endowment for international education.

The 100th Congress took further important initiatives to strengthen foreign language education. The fact that many of them were included in two of the major pieces of legislation enacted by the 100th Congress--the Hawkins-Stafford School Improvement Amendments (PL 100-297) and the Omnibus Trade Act (PL 100-418) (with most of the language-related programs authorized in both measures)--suggests the important role Congress envisions for language education in school reform and in strengthening America's competitive base. The Hawkins-Stafford Amendments reauthorize and expand bilingual education and emergency immigrant education, establishes the English Literacy Grant program to build the English proficiency of adults and out of school youths, foreign languages assistance and Presidential awards for teaching excellence in foreign languages. The Trade legislation also established an international business education program to improve knowledge of the international context of business and to provide training in critical foreign languages.

In the current Congress this support for language education and international studies continues. The 101st Congress has made "international networks" eligible for participation in the Library Services and Construction Act programs and increased the permited size of grants for purchase of foreign publications. The House legislation reauthorizing the Perkins Vocational Education Act expanded the bilingual vocational education program and mandated a study of vocational education programs in major international trading partners of the U.S. to provide a basis for more adequate assessment of American

programs. Legislation authorizing aid to Poland and Hungary established a new exchange program, as did the expansion of the Caribbean Basin Initiative and related international scholarships in the Budget Reconciliation Act passed by the House.

There may be other important developments on the horizon. The "Foreign Language Competence for the Future Act" introduced by Congressman Panetta and the companion bill introduced by Senator Dodd (H.R. 2188/ S. 1690) would provide summer institutes for elementary school language teachers, would provide loans for students studying foreign languages at the graduate level if they enter teaching, would enact the recommendation of the Southern Governors' Association to establish foreign language institutes to assist small and medium sized businesses in international trade and related activity, would provide support for use of telecommunications in foreign language education, and would help establish consortia in critical languages. Other pending legislation for national service, teacher training, reauthorization of OERI research programs and the coming reauthorization of the Higher Education Act offer opportunities to significantly strengthen foreign language education.

While these improvements are potentially important and demonstrate continuing Congressional support for foreign language and international skills, most of these programs have received minimal amounts of funding and in some cases they have not been funded at all. If statutory language and enrollment figures were enough, America would be on its way to moving beyond "the tongue-tied American". But, as discussed below,

simple enrollment and legislative authorizations are not enough. Quality research about America's language skills, the effectiveness of the current foreign language education system, and its implications for business and the broader American community is essential both to upgrade language instruction and to build the political consensus and priorities vital to win badly needed funding for quality language education.

In point of fact, despite major initiatives to upgrade language education by local, state, and federal policy makers, the Department of Education has continued to give very low priority to research on language education. It is time to bring the Education Summit's sky-writing down to earth. Foreign language instruction is currently being offered in just one fifth of elementary schools and 87% of secondary schools. And while the Department of Education has sometimes given rhetorical support for language education (as in the inclusion of foreign language education in former Secretary Bennett's proposal for a "Madison School" model curriculum), effective support whether measured in terms of research and dissemination of "what works" or by funding, has been severly limited at best.

There is wide support for change. For example, 165 business and educational associations have established the Coalition for Foreign Language and International Studies (C.A.F.L.I.S.) to review the state of language education and to make concrete proposals to upgrade language education in our nation.

It is time to move the policy agenda beyond platitudes about moving beyond "the tongue-tied American". America needs to develop hard-headed, empirically-based programs that upgrade language instruction. Research on language education is the lever to accomplish these changes.

"THE DETAIL THAT FAILED": THE NEED FOR LANGUAGE EDUCATION RESEARCH:

Expansion of language "requirements" is not enough. Our nation's college and university students routinely meet their schools' language requirements, but graduates frequently fail to meet the standards required to succeed outside the classroom. Most postsecondary schools expect students to become proficient in a new language in two years. No other country expects students to become proficient in a language in so short a time. The "no go" Chevy "NOVA" and President Carter's "lust" for the Polish people were not simple blunders in translation--they are symptoms of a larger problem with our nation's language education. Many students end up with "survival language skills" able to speak simple sentences like "How much does this cost?" But Americans want to do more than survive--they want to succeed. To raise the level of second language competency to the level needed to succeed in the 1990s we need to work for change in several areas. Educational research and effective dissemination of results is vital to highlight issues and identify effective solutions.

Research on language learning is urgently needed to upgrade basic work on pedagogy in language education. This is clearly researchable, there will be large payoffs in advancing the field, and the findings have clear implications for improving the language competencies of Americans. There are several areas which need substantial research and program development to improve classroom instruction. These issues include:

1. SEVERE SHORTAGES OF CLASSROOM TEACHERS: While administrators have historically proved adept at keeping a warm body in the classroom, serious concerns remain about quality control as new language requirements and growing demand put increased demands on staffing. The increases can be large. For example, Texas, Florida, New York, and Oklahoma experienced 50% enrollment increases between 1983 and 1987. This increase in interest has outstripped the supply of qualified teachers and instructional materials. The Report of the 1985-1986 National Survey of Science and Mathematics Education found that in 1986 52% of high school principals reported having difficulty hiring fully qualified instructors in foreign languages (compared with 38% in biology, 38% in physical sciences, and 37% in special education). The shortages of qualified bilingual teachers are even more severe for many languages.

In some cases teachers have simply been recruited from abroad--and if the government refuses to extend a teacher's visa, recruiters just go back and recruit another foreign teacher. While international exchanges have a valid and important role in upgrading language instruction, such a 'visa driven merry-go-round' is not an effective long term strategy for upgrading language instruction in the United States. Information on this practice and on problems in recruiting qualified instructors is vital for public policy.

Quality research that identifies the demand and supply for qualified language teachers, that examines the adequacy of the credentialing process, and on other factors in determining the supply of teachers provides information that is essential if America is to sigificantly upgrade language instruction. While some of this information can be gleaned from broader studies, such as those conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, more detailed information on staffing of language education courses and its relation to other aspects of language education (including those discussed below) is needed.

2. UPGRADING THE SKILLS OF CURRENT TEACHERS: A key element in strengthening language education is inservice training and staff development. Teachers with inadequate language skills sabotage language instruction by creating new generations of students who suffer the drugery without learning the language. In time this failure creates new generations of language teachers who don't know the language and undermines public support for language instruction.

In-service training is particularly important for language instructors because language skills, like the skills in music or sports, require constant practice. Research based information on inservice training and on effective models for in-service training is seriously inadequate. The little evidence we have is not encouraging. The Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR), through funding from the U.S. Department of Education, sought to assess the status of foreign language instruction by conducting an in-depth national survey of elementary and secondary schools. Many schools not currently offering foreign languages said they were interested in doing so. Only slightly more than a fifth of the elementary schools offered foreign language study, and of these the overwhelming majority (86%) aimed at various introductory exposures--only 14% of the elementary schools that offered languages offered programs in which students were likely to attain some degree of communicative competence in foreign languages.

This CLEAR "National Profile of Foreign Language Instruction at the Elementary and Secondary School Levels" found that 81% of secondary schools said all their foreign language teachers were certified to teach at the secondary level, while only 26% of the responding elementary schools reported that all their teachers were certified for foreign language teaching at the elementary level. In part this reflects the lack of available teacher training and certification programs geared toward elementary foreign language teachers. While in-service training

is vital to sustain and upgrade instructor language skills, only about half of the elementary school instructors and 69% of the secondary school language instructors in schools with language programs had participated in staff development or in-service training during the past year.

Research that identifies effective practices and models in language education is essential both to inform us about what works best in upgrading teacher skills, and to continue to direct attention to the need for action in this vital area.

3. IMPROVING THE VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL ARTICULATION OF ELEMENTARY, SECONDARY, AND POSTSECONDARY LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION:
In the architecture of our nation's foreign language system there are severe discontinuities, as Dick Lambert at the National Foreign Language Center points out. Early language learning often is not used as building blocks for developing higher levels of foreign language proficiency. Instead we often find ridiculous situations where a student who has had four years of intensive French is thrown back into an elementary French I program with children who have had no exposure to the language.

It is often said that kids are leaving language classrooms without command of a second language. However, when it comes to research, we know very very little about the language and intercultural background that students bring to the classroom, we know little about exactly what proficiency they leave the classroom with, and we know even less about how those language skills are developed or lost after the student leaves the classroom. If the quality of language instruction in this nation is to be upgraded--and if we are to eliminate the terrible waste and close the gaps that undermine language instruction today, effective research on how to improve articulation is needed.

While little data is available on articulation, again the CLEAR "National Profile of Foreign Language Instruction at the Elementary and Secondary School Levels" provides a glimpse of what appears to be a major problem. The study found that nearly a third of the elementary schools reported that because there was no planning ahead for their language students, those students who had studied languages in elementary school were placed in Level 1 classes with students who had no prior contact with the language.

More adequate information about just what problems of articulation do exist is needed. And once we have a better fix on the scope of the problem we need research that effectively identifies and disseminates effective models for eliminating these problems so that our nation's students can build cummulative proficiency in a second language rather than just spinning their wheels going over what they already know or falling through the cracks between curricula.

4. STRATEGIES TO UTILIZE LINGUISTIC SKILLS OF AMERICANS: Many Americans are already proficient in a language other than English--but research on language learning has been slow to identify the scope of our nation's human resources in this area and to determine their potential for improving language education.

The value of building on existing language skills should not be underestimated. As Cambell and Lindholm point out, a 5 year old Korean-American student entering kingergarten from an ethnic neighborhood will have acquired proficiency in the native language of his or her parents and grandparents. If that child were to enter an English immersion program he would never acquire the syntactic and discursal rules that are normally not attained until late childhood. And there will not be the semantic networks that reflect experience and knowledge in the many domains in which a five year old has never participated. That child can easily build proficiency in English while retaining proficiency in his or her native tongue. In contrast, if a university student were to take foreign language courses for 5 hours a week, for 30 weeks of each year for 4 years of his undergraduate career, he would have received only 600 hours of instruction and would be fortunate if his proficiency were rated in the 2/2+ range. On the other hand, the hypothetical five year would be rated, with the limitations suggested, within the 3+/4 level on the same scale.

"Two-way" developmental bilingual education programs allow both native English speakers and speakers of other languages to build proficiency in two languages. This enhances instructor effectiveness because it allows students to teach each other while the teacher guides and fine-tunes language learning. The Department has been slow to research these issues. Research that identifies effective methods of using our nation's language resources is badly needed.

Older Americans who are proficient in languages other than English also provide a useful resource for language education. Research that clarifies what language resources are available in our communities and that identifies effective models for mobilizing these language resources for effective language education is needed.

5.MATERIALS AND EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY: Language teachers--particularly instructors of the less commonly taught languages--often find it difficult to identify and obtain materials for foreign language instruction. Textbook publishers, aiming at the largest possible market, tend to focus on the large markets for French, German and Spanish. Foreign language periodicals are often expensive, hard to obtain, and slow to arrive. Differing national broadcast standards, relatively small markets, inefficient international distribution and copyright laws make it expensive and difficult to obtain an adequate library of film and broadcast materials.

The lack of research focusing not only on the pedagogic usefulness of various types of textbooks, but also on effective ways to integrate foreign materials in instruction make it difficult to effectively select effective texts and to integrate foreign language materials. A little progress is being made on making materials available. For example, the National Endowment for the Humanities has granted funds to the Friends of International Education to collect, world-wide, materials for teaching Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian to elementary and secondary school children who are not native speakers. But research on how to most effectively integrate such materials in language instruction remains limited and noncummulative.

Research that will help guide instructors in developing their own materials is also needed. The CLEAR study of elementary and secondary foreign language instruction found that instructor provided materials were offered by the overwhelming majority of instructors. Rather than ignoring or downgrading this activity that helps improve the fit between the materials and the class, research that can guide instructors in developing materials, and to identify and share effective materials would be useful.

There is no technological quick fix in language learning. Technology is a tool, not a solution. Personal computers, VCRs, satellite dishes and other emerging technologies should be transforming language instruction and international studies. But too often they are not. In many colleges education technology means little more than a language laboratory that students are supposed to occasionally visit for drill-and-kill practice.

Drill is a vital part of learning a language--but so are contextualized higher order skills. Educational "power tools" offer the potential to put students directly into a foreign language context. For example, Hawaii's TELECLASS pilot program matches schools in the program with foreign schools learning the English language. Language is then taught through actual interaction between students in these countries using several different media, including slide and tape shows, video presentations, telephone conversations, television, electronic mail, etc. Such programs create a language classroom without walls, and can serve in providing new motivation and opportunities to practice language skills in real life situtions.

This task is not as easy as it may seem at first blush. The GAO study Power On! and other studies have found that such technology is often not made available to the classroom, and where it is available it is often not used effectively. Each school ends up reinventing the wheel. The CLEAR study of elementary and secondary school instruction found that computer-assisted foreign language instruction was implemented at only 16% of the elementary schools and 20% of the secondary schools.

This may be a blessing in disguise. Over the years I have evaluated many software programs for language learning. Not only are many of the programs badly conceived (many being little more than electronic flash cards), but many don't even spell the vocabulary words correctly. Research that identifies effective educational technologies is needed to upgrade the state of the art.

There is a serious need for research that identifies effective ways for educational technologies to complement language instruction. Such research is important in increasing the incentives to produce quality programs and helps to get them into the classroom by drawing attention to their impact.

6. EFFECTIVE ACADEMIC ALLIANCES: Businesses, local governments, and community-based organizations are among the entities that can strengthen language education programs through helping provide information, materials, and personnel. Given the need for sustained support of language development, internships, work-study programs and other collaborative relations can help motivate students and upgrade the quality of language instruction. While links to the broader community are of overarching interest in educational research, specific information about using such alliances to mobilize language resources in the community, their links to other language education issues, and their role in improving language education is needed.

7. INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE ISSUES: Besides issues relating to the acquisition of foreign language through domestic education programs, several topics relating to study abroad are in serious need of study.

One is closely tied to the above topics. We need to understand far better how study abroad influences language acquisition. We know that immersing a student in a foreign language environment dramatically improves proficiency. We do not understand what point(s) in the

acquisition process study abroad is most productive, how duration of study abroad affects acquisition of proficiency, or how well various types of non-immersion programs assist in building proficiency.

Another set of issues regarding study abroad which cry out for attention concern the pattern of students who choose to study abroad and where they choose to study. Less than one percent of our undergraduates study abroad. Virtually all go to a few traditional overseas locations to study humanities and social science subjects. Very few come from minority backgrounds. To meet emerging national skills needs, we need to get more students from all social and economic backgrounds studying a broader range of subjects in more locations around the globe. Research into barriers inhibiting reaching these goals is extremely important.

In sum, although international exchanges are a vital element in building language proficiency and are an increasingly important element in opening employment opportunities, O.E.R.I. has not effectively focused research on the role of international exchanges in education. Research on the effectiveness and longitudinal consequences of exchange programs is badly needed.

8. DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE INFRASTRUCTURE: Proficieny in a second language requires continuing practice. Studies of second language learning suggest that it may take eight or more years for limited-English proficient students to reach grade level norms for native speakers in language achievement as measured by standardized tests. As in sports or music, language skills can be developed and

honed only through constant practice. Foreign publications, broadcasts, and human contact are often scarce on campus and unavailable off-campus. It is highly inefficient to bring students to a reasonable level of language proficiency while paying virtually no attention to the resources available to these students once they leave the classroom.

"Language: use it or lose it" summarizes the problems facing a individual who has developed proficiency in a foreign language but is leaving the classroom. "Language infrastructure" refers to the system of support and language resources available to individuals working to sustain their proficiency in a second language outside the classroom. Broadcasts of foreign language programing, foreign language materials in libraries, formal and informal groups of individuals who meet periodically to practice foreign language skills are among the elements of language infrastructure.

Again, we have little systematic information about the availability of such resources. We have even less knowledge regarding the effectiveness of various configurations in sustaining and enhancing foreign language proficiency. A center on language education and research could play an important role in improving our knowledge in this area.

9. WORKPLACE LANGUAGE SKILLS: The American workforce is aging. This demographic trend, linked to speeding technological change and

growing competition make continued learning important. Business is already active in educating its employees. American firms may soon spend more than $60 million a year on classes for employees, approaching the total expenditures of the nation's 4 year colleges. According to the Carnegie Foundation, more than 10 million employees are now being trained or retrained, compared to 12 million undergraduates.

While education in the workplace is a critical component of our nation's educational system, we have virtually no systematic information on the nature of language training in the workplace, on trends, and on the links between this training and the language education programs in our schools. We know very little about the structure of demand for language skills, and vital information regarding trends in demand for foreign language proficiency and shifts in foreign language proficiency is virtually non-existent. Information on this continuing education and its links to language education in our schools is badly needed.

10. DEVELOPMENT OF EFFECTIVE INDICATORS OF GLOBAL COMPETENCES: Currently we know little about what language skills students bring to the classroom, what language-learning strategies they use to learn a language, and what happens to language skills after the student completes the final exam. We know even less about the longitudinal trends in these and other variables. While we have clear evidence that the structure of demand for language skills in employment and scholarship is shifting in vital ways, we have virtually no systematic information about the nature and scope of these changes and their implications for language

instruction and labor markets. This is fundamental information for language education. Without it, we don't know "what works", let alone "what works best". Without such information, it is impossible to figure out how we are doing relative to other nations, or even relative to our own past record. Without it we can do little but keep trying to muddle through in providing language education. Work on development of this information base and on indicator systems that would allow these patterns to be effectively tracked is essential to provide guidance for policy.

In sum, the need for empirical, cummulative research on language learning and related issues of staffing, curricula, and so on for strengthing classroom performance is vital. And, more broadly, information is needed on the performance of our national language system to guide accountability and policy reform.

III. O.E.R.I. AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION:

Changes in the structure of demand for language skills is forcing changes in the way we teach foreign languages. It is vital that our nation's research agenda address this. Local, state, and national intitiatives show the high priority that Americans give to this issue. A center which focuses on language education and research does not duplicate current activities and would play an important role in providing cummulative policy-relevant research which can be used to inform policy decisions and upgrade language instruction.

It is important that the center not create an artificial distinction between the limited-English students who are learning English in our schools, and the majority language students who are working to learn additional languages. There are important common issues of pedagogy and language policy which link instruction of language majority and language minority students. As in the case of developmental bilingual education, there are also important opportunities for positive interactive effects between these students that strengthen proficiency in both English and a second language for all students. Policies which ignore these linkages and payoffs are short-sighted and self-defeating.

Despite these needs, the Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement seems intent on reducing, rather than augmenting research to improve language education. Despite opposition from Congress, the Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR) was terminated after its fourth year of funding, leaving the Department of Educ tion with no research center focusing primarily on language education issues.

The funding taken from CLEAR was folded into a new center for research on education of the disadvantaged. This raises several concerns. First, language acquisition should not be treated as a disadvantage--either pedagogically or institutionally. Lumping issues of language learning with issues of disadvantage sends out exactly the wrong signal to students, parents, and teachers throughout America. It sends out the message that a second language is a disadvantage. It is

vital to our nation's strength that the message be conveyed that it is not un-American to speak two languages--and it is certainly not a disadvantage.

Burying language education issues in an overarching theme, such as cultural diversity, raises additional concerns. When everyone is responsible for something in principle, in practice you usually find that no one is exercising that responsibility and that no one can be held responsible.

Language education and related skills have no institutional focus under either the Department's current activities or under its proposals. While the R.F.P. published in the Federal Register on September 12 includes "cultural diversity" , defined as 'finding ways to make use of opportunities presented by the increasingly wide range of lingusitic and cultural backgrounds found in American classrooms and finding ways to surmont the educational challenges posed by this diversity" it is at best unclear how this will translate into action to improve language instruction to meet the challenges facing our nation.

CONCLUSION:

In sum, one of the startling things about the research agenda of O.E.R.I. today--and as envisioned in the Department's September 12 R.F.P.--is how inward looking this research agenda is. We can no longer afford to imagine that what Americans should learn about ends at the water's edge. This turning inward is particularly disturbing because many of the domestic issues facing our nation--from

racial/ethnic/cultural diversity to economic development to international peace-keeping--are closely tied to international skills and language competencies.

America's language classrooms increasingly serve as bridges to other disciplines and sectors. Technological change, and growth in international trade, and changing organizations mean that increasingly even if an employee never leaves her desk at Battle Creek, she will benefit from command of foreign language. More and more corporate executives, farmers, police, secretaries, forest rangers and other Americans in all fields are finding that foreign languages help them do their jobs. Our nation's rapidly growing involvement in the world economy means that never before have Americans who speak English only been at such a competitive disadvantage.

While the O.E.R.I. research agenda is turning inward, technology, demographics, trade, and economic restructuring are making language skills more important than ever before at all levels of education. It is essential that our schools empower America's children to turn emerging challenges into opportunities, that they learn the skills needed to make America an emerging power equipped to compete with and to help lead our world rather than lag behind as a "has-been" competitor.

It is vital that the Department provide leadership in this area by establishing a clear institutional focus for research which works effectively on issues of language acquisition and use. The Department should carefully reconsider its proposal and establish an educational agenda that equips Americans to wheel and deal with the world rather

than turning inward. An adequately funded center for research on language education and research is needed to face these emerging challenges. This is vital to sustain educational reform efforts, to implement the priorities expressed by governors, Congress, and the American people, and is a key part of America's efforts to strengthen its ability to compete and win in our increasingly complex and fast moving world system. I urge that the Department of Education and Congress give high priority to establishing and ensuring the effectiveness of a center for language education and research.

Thank you.